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NOTE

ON THE

PANTSHÁTSHARA-YÓGAM,

THE

FORMULA OF FIVE CHARACTERS.



THE following is a brief view of the mystic formula mentioned in the preceding paper. I have drawn the materials of it chiefly from a Hindú author, who is claimed by both the Sáiva and Váishṇava schools.

This Mantra, or formula of prayer, is one of the highest meaning and power in the Hindú system. It is regarded as an incarnation of Deity, and as including in itself all the powers of the universe. It is employed by both gods and men, in their respective works.

By its instrumentality, the operative deities develop and control the universe of beings, and again resolve the whole into its primeval state. By it, all the laws of nature, physical, intellectual, and even moral, are made to operate.

It is by this marvellous power, also, that the hierophant is enabled to control, in certain ways, all existences; and is thus empowered to bring into the previously formed image "the real presence" of the five great gods, with their Saktis and accompaniments, and to make it their permanent abode; all which is essential to constitute it an idol, or a proper object of worship.

The characters of this Mantra have also an extensive emblematic meaning, thus embracing the universe in classes of fives. Among these classes we have the five operative deities; their five Saktis; the five divine operations; the

five divine weapons; the five colors; the five elements; and their developed classes of fives; etc.

Such are the things brought into view by "continually repeating the five characters." The repetition is not, therefore, to the Hindú an unmeaning ceremony. Each rehearsal is to be made understandingly, and is thus a step in the prescribed course that leads regularly through the dominions of the five indwelling deities of the human Microcosm.

This Mantra, like the universe, exists in three successive stages of development, which may be styled the Ethereal, the Spiritual, and the Corporeal.

1. The Ethereal Pantshátsharam can be neither written nor spoken. It is a "divine light, which can be perceived and enjoyed only by the enlightened soul." From this emanate the pure forms or organisms of souls; also the forms of the gods in their higher stage of development, and "of thirty-two millions of beings, [i. e. classes of beings.]"

2. The Spiritual Pantshátsharam is a development from the Ethereal, and exists in visible characters, or such as may be written, but not spoken aloud. They may be whispered in the ear of the disciple. These are: *a-u-m-Vintu-Nátham*. The first three of them constitute the mystic *óm*, (*aum*), "through the help of which," as the Véda declares, "you contemplate the Supreme Spirit." Respecting this monosyllable, Manu says, "All rites ordained in the Véda, such as oblations to fire and solemn offerings, pass away; but the monosyllable *óm* is considered to be that which passes not away, since it is a symbol of the Most High, the Lord of created beings." The sense in which *óm* is a "symbol of the Lord of created beings," is manifest, the three letters of which it is composed being the symbols, respectively, of Bráhma, Vishnu, and Siva, or of the Generator, Preserver, and Transformer of "created beings."

By this five-fold power is effected the second stage in the development of the universe of gods, men, and things, which are unfolded in classes of fives, as in their ethereal stage. Hence the five operative deities, Sathá-Sivam, Mayésuran, Siva, Vishnu and Bráhma; their Saktis; the intellectual organisms, and all the other powers of man; and other beings.

These characters also stand as the indices, or symbols, of all the various classes of fives in the second stage of development.

3. The Corporeal Pantshátsharam is the more earthly form of the same wondrous powers, being developed from the Spiritual. The characters in which it exists, are: *na-ma-si-vá-ya*. These may be written and spoken by proper persons. Their functions with respect to the corporeal stage of development, correspond to those of the previous forms with respect to the ethereal and spiritual stage.

These characters constitute the formula employed in consecrating temples, in constituting idols, etc.

The same powers are considered as incarnate, or embodied, in many things natural and artificial. As in the cow, from which are obtained the five sacred articles, namely, milk, curd, ghee, and the two evacuations; in the sacred lamp, where we have the vessel, the ghee, (which is burnt,) the fire, the wick, and the light; in the peacock, which carries in its plumage the five radical colors, yellow, black, red, green, and white; in man, monkeys, rats, and the sacred tortoise, which present the five symbols in their fingers and toes. Hence, the five things from the cow, and also the lamp, are essential articles in all important ceremonies. For the same reason, the rat, as well as the peacock, is regarded as a vehicle of Deity.

These characters, like the preceding, are symbols of the individuals belonging to the classes of fives, in their mundane state of existence. These are the letters which are to be constantly repeated by the devotee in his devotions.

Thus, as stated in one of the sacred books, "you may here understand the existence and diversified nature of the five letters, how they diversify words and things, and govern the universe, and how they at length remove, [i. e. are resolved into their primeval elements or states.]"

This brief sketch will suffice to show, why it is that the Hindú attaches so much importance to this formula; and wherein consists the merit of its frequent repetition.